

### Remarks

In view of the following remarks, favorable reconsideration of the outstanding office action is respectfully requested. Claims 1 – 34 remain in this application.

#### **1. Allowable Subject Matter**

Applicants note with much appreciation the Examiner's allowance of claim 32 and claim 33, and further that the Examiner has indicated the subject matter of claims 8 – 17, 19, 20, and 22 - 24 are patentable and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

#### **2. Request for Correction of Inventorship**

Applicants also appreciate the efforts and professionalism of Examiner Kitov and Examiner Sircus in facilitating the correction of inventorship in the instant application.

#### **3. The Final Rejection is Improper**

MPEP 706.07(a) states that: "Under present practice, second or any subsequent actions on the merits shall be final, *except where the examiner introduces a new ground of rejection that is neither necessitated by applicant's amendment of the claims nor based on information submitted in an information disclosure statement* filed during the period set forth in 37 C.F.R. 1.97 (c) with the fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. 1.17(p). In the outstanding office action, the Examiner has introduced a new ground of rejection that was not necessitated by applicants' *amendment of the claims* nor based on any information disclosure statement filed by the applicants. While the applicants express their appreciation to the Examiner for accepting the *Request for Correction of Inventorship*, a *Request for Correction of Inventorship* does not fall under the categories listed in MPEP 706.07(a). As the Examiner knows, the over-arching principle behind the examination process is to provide the applicants with a full and fair examination of the claims with respect to newly applied references. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the finality of the outstanding office action be withdrawn.

#### 4. § 103 Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 – 7, 18, 21, 25 – 31, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable for obviousness over U.S. Patent No. 6,671,145 to Germain et al. (hereinafter Germain) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,013,929 to Dietz et al. (hereinafter Dietz).

Germain is directed to a resettable circuit interrupting device, such as a GFCI, that include a reset lockout mechanism, an independent trip mechanism and reverse wiring protection. The device includes a conical reset plunger. The plunger is notched to force a successful test before resetting the device. Referring to Figure 6, if the circuit interrupting device is operational and properly wired as shown by the test, the solenoid forces a plunger to slide a latch in a first direction (B), allowing the reset plunger to move through a hole in the latch and complete its journey in direction A such that latch 60' will move left and rest atop plunger shoulder 78c' as shown in FIG. 6c. Thereafter, the reset plunger, when released will pull up latch 60' under its bias to complete the reset of the device. As can be appreciated, *if the test fails, the latch 60' will not move in direction B and the notched conical tip 78b' of the reset plunger 78' will keep the plunger from going through the hole in the latch 60' and the device will be locked out from the reset function.*

Dietz is directed to An electric receptacle for ordinary household or trade size junction boxes having a complete ground fault circuit interrupter incorporated in the receptacle, including electronic components to detect a ground fault on the load side of such receptacle, and a coil and trip mechanism which is actuated when a ground fault is detected. A number of the components are utilized in this invention in ways that enable them to perform multiple functions eliminating the need for separate components and the space they would require, thereby making it possible to install a complete ground fault circuit interrupter in a smaller space within a receptacle.

According to the **MPEP 2143**, three basic criteria must be met to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the

prior art, not in applicant's disclosure. *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

A. The Cited References Do Not Teach or Suggest All the Claim Limitations

Claims 1 – 31:

The Examiner does not establish a prima facie case of obvious because he does not show where the cited references teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The Examiner does not show where either Germain or Dietz, whether taken alone or in combination, teach or suggest the test circuit recited in claim 1. The Examiner does not assert that Dietz teaches the test circuit element, but rather, he alleges that Germain does. In particular, the Examiner points to Germain, col. 5, lines 4 – 24 in support of the rejection. Applicants respectfully point out to Examiner Kitov that the cited portion of Germain does not teach or suggest the claim element in question. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The relevant portion of the recited test circuit reads as follows:

“...the test circuit being configured to drive the lock-out mechanism from an unlocked state to the lock-out state if the fault detection circuit and/or power interruption circuit fails to respond to the simulated fault signal within a predetermined period of time.”

On the other hand, Germain teaches a test circuit that drives the lock-out mechanism from the lockout position to the unlocked position if the test passes. It does nothing, if the test fails.

The cited portion of Germain reads:

“If the circuit interrupting device is operational and properly wired as shown by the test, the solenoid forces plunger 54 to slide latch 60' in direction B ... allowing the reset plunger 78' to complete its journey in direction A ... to complete the reset of the device. As can be appreciated, if the test fails, the latch 60' will not move in direction B ...and the device will be locked out from the reset function.”

In comparing the claim language to the cited portion of Germain it becomes clear that the teaching of Germain is completely opposite to the claimed invention. Germain teaches a test apparatus that *drives the lockout from a locked position to an unlocked position if the test passes*. On the other hand, the claimed invention recites a test circuit that *drives the lockout mechanism from an unlocked state to a locked state if the test does not pass within a predetermined period of time*. Viewing the present invention from another direction, the test circuit of the present invention remains in the unlocked state if the test passes within a predetermined period of time. Clearly, Germain teaches a test apparatus that remains locked if the test fails – a lockout mechanism predicated by timing is simply not disclosed, taught or suggested by Germain.

The Examiner relies on Dietz for teaching and/or suggesting a bus bar mechanism for actuating a set of movable contacts. Accordingly, the Examiner makes no representation that Dietz remedies any of the deficiencies pointed out in the above paragraph with regard to Germain. Thus, neither Germain nor Dietz, whether taken alone or taken in combination, teach or suggest the test circuit recited in claim 1 of the present invention. Accordingly, neither Germain nor Dietz, whether taken alone or taken in combination, teach or suggest all the claim limitations recited in claim 1. While the dependent claims are allowable in their own right, indeed the Examiner has indicated that many are allowable, they are also allowable by virtue of their dependency from claim 1.

Claim 18, for example, includes a “second circuit element being configured *to drive the test circuit from the unlocked state to the lock-out state if the fault detection circuit and/or the power interruption circuit fail to respond to the at least one fault condition within the predetermined time period.*” Again, Germain teaches a test apparatus that drives the lockout from a locked position to an unlocked position if the test passes. The teaching of Germain is exactly opposite to the claimed invention.

Independent claim 34:

Claim 34 is similar to claim 18 in that it recites a “second circuit element being configured *to drive the test circuit from the unlocked state to the lock-out state if the fault detection circuit and/or the power interruption circuit fail to respond to the at least one fault condition within the predetermined time period.*” As noted above, the teaching of Germain is exactly opposite to the claimed invention.

B. There is No Suggestion or Motivation to Combine Reference Teachings

It is well established that *if a proposed modification would render the prior art invention being modified unsatisfactory for its intended purpose, then there is no suggestion or motivation to make the proposed modification. In re Gordon*, 733 F.2d 900, 221 USPQ 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1984). In this case, the object of Dietz is to provide a miniature device that eliminates a switch, as well as other components, by utilizing the main breaker of the protected circuit to perform the additional function of opening and closing the GFI circuit that energizes the trip coil. See Dietz, col. 2, lines 45 – 52. This modification would render Germain inoperable and, thus, make Germain unsuitable for its intended purpose.

Because the rejection does not show where the cited references teach or suggest all the claim limitations and because there is no proper motivation to combine the cited references, there can be no prima facie case of obviousness. As such, claims 1 – 7, 18, 21, 25 – 31, and 34 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

## 5. Conclusion

Based upon the remarks and papers of record, Applicant believes the pending claims of the above-captioned application are in allowable form and patentable over the prior art of record. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the pending claims 1 – 34 and a prompt Notice of Allowance thereon.

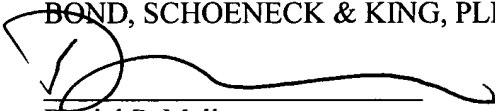
Applicant believes that no extension of time is necessary to make this Response timely. Should Applicant be in error, Applicant respectfully requests that the Office grant such time extension pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) as necessary to make this Response timely, and hereby authorizes the Office to charge any necessary fee or surcharge with respect to said time extension to the deposit account of the undersigned firm of attorneys, Deposit Account 50-1546.

Please direct any questions or comments to Daniel P. Malley at (607) 330-4010.

Respectfully submitted,

BOND, SCHOENECK & KING, PLLC

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Daniel P. Malley  
Registration No. 43,443  
BOND, SCHOENECK & KING, PLLC  
10 Brown Rd.  
Suite 201  
Ithaca, NY  
14850-1248